CHAPTER XX

MIXED MARRIAGES AND BAPTISMS

(1) INCREASE OF MIXED MARRIAGES

(a) *Legal Aspect*

MIXED marriages between Jews and non-Jews were frequent in the first thousand years of the Christian era, even though forbidden by Jewish Law; but as a result of repeated prohibitions by the Church Councils, they ceased entirely towards the end of the Middle Ages. Moreover, the social and religious gulf between Jews and Christians had become so wide that it alone sufficed to prevent mixed marriages.

Yet the prohibition was continued in Canon Law, and as this was the marriage-law of the Christian States, in their laws as well. Mixed marriages were likewise forbidden by the religious laws obtaining in Mohammedan countries.

The first step towards the removal of these prohibitions was made by the French Kevolution, which established the civil character of marriage and refused to regard a difference in religion as a hindrance to it. Still, a strong prejudice against mixed marriages continued both among Jews and Christians. Of the questions laid by Napoleon I before the Jewish Sanhedrin, none called forth such heated debates

as the third: "May a Jew or a Jewess marry a Christian?"
The enlightened French rabbis wished to answer it in the affirmative, the orthodox German (Alsatian) rabbis were for a flat negative. The solution eventually resorted to was that only marriage with Canaanites was directly forbidden, that rabbis might possibly refuse to solemnize marriages with Christians, but that the Jew or Jewess who entered such a marriage would suffer no further religious dis~